

CLAIMS:

1. A printing apparatus using a consumable associated with an identifier, the apparatus comprising:
printing means for printing an image onto an image receiving substrate; reading means for reading the identifier; storage means for holding a list of any previously used identifiers associated with empty consumables; and
a processor arranged to compare the identifier read by the reading means with the list of any previously used identifiers and to generate an invalid indication if there is a match.
2. A printing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the reading means comprises an RF coil.
3. A printing apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the storage means is arranged to hold a table comprising a plurality of identifier fields associated with respective status fields.
4. A printing apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the processor is arranged to load into one of said identifier fields an identifier read by the reading means which does not match a previously used identifier.
5. A printing apparatus according to any preceding claim, which comprises usage monitoring means for monitoring the usage of the consumable.
6. A printing apparatus according to claims 3, 4 and 5, wherein the processor is arranged to update the status field to indicate the amount of consumable remaining based on the usage monitored by the usage monitoring means.
7. A printing apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the consumable comprises a supply of an image receiving substrate.

8. A printing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the usage monitoring means comprises end of substrate detection means.
9. A printing apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the consumable comprises a supply of thermal transfer material.
10. In combination, a printing apparatus and a consumable associated with an identifier, wherein the printing apparatus comprises:
 - printing means for print an image onto an image receiving tape;
 - reading means for reading the identifier;
 - storage means for holding a list of any previously used identifiers associated with empty consumables; and
 - a processor arranged to compare the identifier read by the reading means with the list of any previously used identifiers and to generate an invalid indication if there is a match.
11. A combination according to claim 10, wherein the consumable comprises a cassette in which is housed image receiving substrate.
12. A combination according to claim 10, wherein the consumable comprises a spool around which image receiving substrate is wound.
13. A combination according to claim 10, wherein the consumable comprises a supply of thermal transfer material.
14. A method of operating a printing apparatus which is adapted to receive a consumable, the method comprising:
 - reading an identifier from the consumable, comparing the identifier against a list of any previously used identifiers associated with empty consumables, and
 - generating an invalid indication if there is a match.

15. A method according to claim 14, which comprises the further step of reading a secondary identifier from the consumable, the secondary identifier identifying a supplier of the consumable, and
displaying information about the supplier of a consumable.

16. A consumable providing at least one of image receiving substrate and thermal transfer material and carrying an identifier indicative of the origin of the consumable.

17. A consumable according to claim 16, which carries a secondary identifier indicative of the supplier of the consumable.

18. A method of making a consumable providing at least one of an image receiving substrate and thermal transfer material, the method comprising the steps of:

at a manufacturing location marking the consumables with an identifier indicative of the origin of the consumables; and

at a secondary location, marking the consumable with a secondary identifier indicative of the supplier the consumable.

19. A printing apparatus using a consumable associated with an identifier, the apparatus comprising:

a printing arrangement adapted to print an image onto an image receiving substrate;

a reader for reading the identifier;

a store for holding a list of any previously used identifiers associated with empty consumables; and

a processor arranged to compare the identifier read by the reader with the list of any previously used identifiers and to generate an invalid indication if there is a match.

20. In combination, a printing apparatus and a consumable associated with an identifier, wherein the printing apparatus comprises:

 a printing arrangement adapted to print an image onto an image receiving tape;

 a reader adapted to read the identifier;

 a store holding a list of any previously used identifiers associated with empty consumables; and

 a processor arranged to compare the identifier read by the reading means with the list of any previously used identifiers and to generate an invalid indication if there is a match.